

BLUES ARE STUNG

Wycombe Wanderers 1,
Chicago Sting 4

By STUART EARP

WYCOMBE Wanderers produced some of their worst football for a long time on Wednesday night when they crashed 4-1 to American touring team Chicago Sting. And if there is something amusing about their opponents names, there was nothing funny about Wycombe's display.

Fielding four "squad" members, Wycombe just couldn't get going against hard working and skilful opponents who showed speed and imagination on the break. Strangely enough, Wanderers had more than enough chances to win this game hands down — but they threw them away time after time. It wasn't just the finishing, however. Pass after pass went astray through carelessness and contributed greatly to this, the Blues' heaviest defeat for at least a couple of seasons.

Some may point out that this game was only a friendly but a few hundred people turned out on Wednesday evening and must have been disappointed with the standard of football produced.

Few of the home players could feel happy with their personal performances and stand-in goalkeeper Brian Steventon had an unhappy 90 minutes. He was responsible for two of the four goals but could well point to his shaky defence. Too often the Wycombe back four were caught square by the nippy Chicago front runners, who have a class player in O'Konner.

Wanderers were steadily amassing an impressive number of corners when the Sting, so named after the successful film, and managed by former Manchester United star Bill Foulkes, took the lead. O'Konner was put clean through a static defence and gave Steventon little chance with a well placed drive.

Tony Horseman and Steve Perrin both spurned chances while the visitors managed to boot clear several other dangerous penalty box situations before they went further ahead with a somewhat lucky goal. O'Konner drove across the six yard box where Keith Mead got his head to the ball which struck Ian Stone, hit Mead again and then fell nicely for Stone to tuck past Steventon. The pressure began when the 'keeper came out too early to take the ball from O'Konner.

In the 40th minute the home fans were again shocked as Sting made it 3-0. A cross from Cliffe sailed towards Steventon who misjudged the flight of the ball in the swirling wind. O'Konner stooped to head across goal and Stone slipped the ball home.

There was worse to come in the second half. Only five minutes had gone when O'Konner sprinted through again and as substitute Snow failed to get in his tackle, the striker fired past Steventon.

After the fourth goal, play went from bad to worse. Misplaced passes became commonplace as the Blues struggled to combine as a team and when chances did come along they went untaken. Chicago seemed content to rely on breaks from defence and spent most of the time in their own half. But with Wycombe's finishing so inept, they were rarely worried.

Wanderers did improve in the later stages when 'keeper Merwyn Crawston tipped away efforts from Horseman and Perrin and it came as some relief when Horseman at last found the target after weaving his way past two defenders in the 84th minute.

By then, "Bodger's" goal was purely consolation and one couldn't help feeling that had Wanderers fielded their strongest team, the game would have been a lot more worthwhile.

WYCOMBE: B. Steventon; D. Alexander, K. Mead, D. Bullock, P. Griffiths (sub P. Snow 45 mins); H. Kennedy (sub A. Phillips 45 mins), T. Reardon, G. Mackenzie; A. Horseman, K. Searle (sub D. Evans 45 mins), S. Perrin.